

**ENHANCING THE LEGACY: GIFTS FROM IRMGARD ROSENBERGER TO
THE LUDWIG ROSENBERGER LIBRARY OF JUDAICA**
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Enhancing the Legacy:

Gifts from Irmgard Rosenberger to the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica

Over the past few years, Irmgard Rosenberger has presented a series of splendid gifts to the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica. The newly added materials include manuscripts, correspondence, broadsides, caricatures, prints, maps and ephemeral materials. These original documents and popular images provide fresh perspectives on many of the topics covered in the Rosenberger Library, enriching our understanding of the Jewish experience over the past 500 years. Irmgard Rosenberger's generosity, recognized in this exhibition, illustrates the important role of private collectors and donors in both forming great collections and continuing to develop them.

"Enhancing the Legacy" includes a selection of Irmgard Rosenberger's recent gifts that range in date from the 16th century to the 20th and illustrate recurring themes in the history of the Jewish people. Items such as the infamous *Judensau* in the first case and the document signed by Adolf Hitler in the last evoke with powerful immediacy the continuing currents and periodic outbursts of virulent anti-Semitism. But the exhibition also calls attention to the accomplishments of the Jewish community in Frankfurt, progress toward naturalization in England, and the prelude to establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. As these examples suggest, primary sources help us to appreciate in full the often contradictory complexity of historical events and narratives. Such perspective is essential to understanding the interweaving of tragedy, tenacity and achievement in Jewish history which is the subject of the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica.

Ludwig Rosenberger presented his collection of about 17,000 books to the University of Chicago in 1980. Ludwig and Irmgard Rosenberger were frequent visitors to the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica in Special Collections until Mr. Rosenberger's death in 1987; and Irmgard Rosenberger continues to visit the Library, often accompanied by guests. Through these visits, the Rosenbergers participate in the physical and intellectual context within which the collection is now used by students and scholars. By deepening the resources available at the University of Chicago for the study of Jewish history and culture, and the contributions of the Jewish people, Irmgard Rosenberger is "enhancing the legacy" of the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica.

Mark Alznauer, graduate student in the Committee on Social Thought, selected the items and researched this exhibition.

**CASE 2 JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE: PERSECUTION AND
 PROTECTION**

For centuries, the experience of Jews in many countries of Europe was marked by periods of grudging tolerance amidst mass hostility; legally mandated restrictions; expulsion, migration or extermination. The Jewish community in Frankfurt, which can be traced to

the end of the 11th century, exemplifies this pattern. Soon after settling the Frankfurt Jews grew prosperous; the Rothschild family name comes from the red shield that hung outside their house in the Frankfurt ghetto during the 16th century. Tensions between Jews and Christian townspeople were present from the start, but the Jewish community would often have a defender in the crown, in return for harsh taxes on all Jewish commerce. This required Jewish lenders to charge increasingly high interest on their loans, further straining relationships and breeding hatred. Protection by the rulers against persecution would prove to be precarious. Even Carl IV's promise to protect the Jews in 1349 during the Black Plague could not save the community from destruction at the hands of religious fanatics. In 1462 the Frankfurt Jews were expelled from the city proper and forced to settle in the ghetto, or "Judengasse." Persecution did not stop with segregation, however. In 1612, when Fettmilch, a debtor of the Jews, led a violent attack on the Judengasse, over 1,300 Jews fled Frankfurt. Once again, the emperor intervened to punish Fettmilch and restore the valuable flow of Jewish tax revenues.

The items on view in this case are from the 18th and 19th centuries, when the Frankfurt Jews were slowly, and fitfully, gaining more rights. In 1764, Jews were allowed to appear in public, at the coronation of Joseph II. But major gains in rights and recognition came after the French Revolution. In 1796, the Jews were permitted to live amongst Christians, and, in 1811, they were granted civic equality. These rights were reversed in 1816; after reforms in 1853 and 1864, almost all restrictions on Jewish citizenship were lifted. Jews continued to enjoy full rights and make important contributions to the artistic and economic life of Frankfurt until the Nuremberg laws were imposed in 1935 and the Holocaust destroyed the Frankfurt Jewish community.

CASE 3 JEWISH LIFE IN 18TH CENTURY ENGLAND: TENSION & PROGRESS

Although individual Jews were living in England much earlier, the first Jewish communities can be traced to the 1066 arrival of William the Conqueror, who for economic reasons encouraged the immigration of Jewish merchants. The British monarchy taxed the Jewish community heavily, which, as in Germany, led to higher interest rates and exacerbated anti-Semitism. The situation worsened in the 13th century, when the crown not only began to deny Jews civic and property rights, but finally forbade Jewish lenders from charging interest. The resulting poverty of the Jewish community made it financially painless for Edward I in 1290 to expel all Jews from England.

Jews were readmitted to England under Oliver Cromwell in 1656, after it was discovered that no law prevented their arrival. This informal solution was followed by a written promise of protection from Charles II; and, in 1698, the legality of practicing Judaism was recognized in the Act for Suppressing Blasphemy. Jews had full civic rights and protection in the courts, although they were prohibited, along with other non-Anglicans, from holding certain offices. The Jewish community grew rapidly, and during the 18th century English Jews began to play an important role in national and international economic affairs. The items selected for this case show some of the strides forward – and the tensions created by this progress – as Jews reassimilated into English life.

The Jewish Naturalization Bill, a notice of which is included in this case, passed in 1753 but was quickly rescinded due to anti-Jewish sentiment. The riots that had followed the initial passage of the bill caused many London Jews, especially the wealthier Sephardis, to undergo baptism and conversion. Nonetheless, Jews continued to build synagogues, schools and hospitals and become more engaged in community and national affairs. By 1855 London had its first Jewish Lord Mayor in David Salomons, but it would not be until 1858 that the Jews would receive full rights in England.

CASE 4 EDOUARD DRUMONT AND ANTI-SEMITISM IN FRANCE

Irmgard Rosenberger's gifts include a group of letters, manuscripts and ephemera relating to Edouard Adolphe Drumont (1844-1917), a French author, newspaper editor and Algerian deputy who was a leading voice for anti-Semitism. After falling out with a newspaper he worked for because it was supposedly controlled by Jews, Drumont wrote the two-volume "*La France juive*" (1886). In it he analyzes the role Jews have played in French politics and culture, concluding that they have attempted to parasitically undermine and conquer France through economic exploitation. The work was phenomenally successful and promulgated a specious theoretical basis for French anti-Semitism in the late 19th century.

In 1889, Drumont founded *La Libre Parole*, a right-wing newspaper that began as an organ for anti-Semitic views. After an unsuccessful run for office as the representative of Amiens, he retired from public life. But in the mid 1890s, when Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French Army, was accused of being a spy and found guilty on little evidence by a secret military tribunal, Drumont broke the story for *La Libre Parole*, promoting Dreyfus's actions as evidence of his theory of a Jewish conspiracy to ruin France. This was the beginning of the notorious Dreyfus Affair, which would return Drumont to the public arena and bring to light the depth of anti-Semitism in late 19th century France.

After Émile Zola's intervention on behalf of Dreyfus, and his accusations of a military cover-up, the debate would engulf all of French society, forcing everyone to take sides. Drumont, from his post as editor of *La Libre Parole*, became the champion of the *anti-Dreyfusards*. Dreyfus was eventually acquitted of all charges in 1899. The items on view in this case date from the 1890s, when Drumont's popularity was tied to the Dreyfus Affair. They provide a wonderful complement to the extraordinary collection of books, newspapers, caricatures and other materials related to the Dreyfus Affair in the Rosenberger Library.